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THE SOCIOLOGY OF CONFLICT.^{*}

III.

IF an evolution occurs in the form of incessant rhythmical reaction of two periods, the one equally legitimate with the other, and attaining its proper meaning only in relationship and antithesis with the other, the image that we present to ourselves of such a procedure seldom reproduces its objective equilibrium and the persistent level upon which the one element always relieves the other. Almost inevitably, however, on the other hand, we give to the reaction between them a kind of teleological accent, so that the one element always counts as the point of departure, the essential premise out of which the other develops, while the transition in the opposite direction appears to be a retrogression. Assuming, for example, that the world-process is a perpetual reaction between qualitative homogeneity of combined masses of matter, and differentiated heterogeneity of the same matter; supposing also that we are convinced that one of these conditions always proceeds from the other, and then again the derived condition passes into another form of the primary condition; nevertheless, as our thought-categories always function, we still regard the condition of homogeneity as first, that is, our demand for explanation requires much more the derivation of manifoldness from unity than the reverse, although it would perhaps be much more correct to assume neither of the two as the first, but to posit an unending rhythm, in which we can make no halt at any calculable stage, but must rather assume the stage as one derived from an earlier condition. The same thing is true of the principles of rest and motion. Although, in the whole of nature as well as in its particular details, the two constantly relieve each other, yet we are in the habit of assuming that the condition of rest is original, or at least a definitive condition which, so to speak, calls for no derivation. Accordingly,

^{*} Translated by A. W. SMALL.

inasmuch as we contemplate together a pair of periods, the one always seems to be explanatory or needing explanation; and only as we place them in this subordination of rank do we seem to ourselves to have seized upon the meaning of their reaction. With their mere reaction as the phenomena present it, and which in itself designates neither of the component elements as the primary and neither as the secondary, we are not satisfied. Distinctions of difference of value and of purpose are so much a part of the tendencies of the human mind that we cannot refrain from representing to ourselves the unbroken flow of alternating periods through such distinctions as those just referred to, and from expressing them at the same time under the forms of ruling and serving, or of preparation and fulfilment, or of provisional and definitive situation. The same relationship may be asserted of struggle and peace. Both in the serial and in the contemporary aspect of social life these conditions are so interwoven that in every peaceful situation the conditions for future conflict, and in every struggle the conditions for future peace, are developing. If we follow the stages of social development backward under these categories, we can find no stopping-place. In historical reality each condition always has the other as its corollary. Nevertheless, we always feel an essential difference in the significance of the different members of this series. Struggle seems to be the preliminary, the purpose of which resides in the fact and in the contents of peace. While the rhythm between the two elements, objectively considered, plays its rôle upon a single level, our estimate of value constructs at the same time iambic periods out of the process, with struggle as the thesis and with peace as the arsis. Thus in the most ancient constitution of Rome, the king must first appeal to the citizens for their consent if he wished to begin a war, but he did not need this consent when it was a question of peace. In the latter case the consent is assumed as a matter of course.

It is obvious that the transition from war to peace must present a more considerable problem than the reverse. The latter needs really no particular scrutiny. For the situations within the condition of peace out of which struggle emerges are them-

selves already struggle in diffuse, unobserved or latent form. For instance, if the economic advantage which the southern states of the American union had over the northern states before the Civil War, as a consequence of the slave system, was also the reason for this war, yet so long as no outbreking antagonism arises, but there is nearly an imminent condition of the one portion of the nation as against another condition in another portion, this reason for conflict remains outside of the specific question of war and peace. At the moment, however, in which the situation began to assume a color which meant war, this itself was an accumulation of antagonisms; of hatred, feelings, newspaper arguments, frictions between private persons, and on the borders, reciprocal moral equivocations in matters outside of the central antithesis. The end of peace is thus not distinguished by a special sociological situation, but rather out of some sort of real relationships within a peaceful condition antagonism is developed immediately, if not at once in its most visible and energetic form. The case is different, however, in the reverse direction. Peace does not attach itself so immediately to struggle. The termination of strife is a special undertaking which belongs neither in the one category nor in the other, like a bridge which is of a different nature from that of either bank which it unites. The sociology of struggle demands, therefore, at least as an appendix, an analysis of the forms in which struggle comes to an end, and which present certain special forms of reaction not to be observed in other circumstances.

The particular motive which in most cases corresponds with the transition from war to peace is the simple longing for peace. With the emergence of this factor there comes into being, as a matter of fact, peace itself, at first in the form of the wish immediately parallel with the struggle itself, and it may without special transitional form displace struggle. We need not pause long to observe that the desire for peace may spring up both directly and indirectly; the former may occur either through the return to power of this peaceful character in the party which is essentially in favor of peace; or through the fact that, through the mere change of the formal stimulus of struggle and

of peace which is peculiar to all natures, although in different rhythms, the latter comes to the surface and assumes a control which is sanctioned by its own nature alone. In the case of the indirect motive, however, we may distinguish, on the one hand, the exhaustion of resources which, without removal of the persistent contentiousness, may instal the demand for peace; and, on the other hand, the withdrawal of interest from struggle through a higher interest in some other object. The latter case begets all sorts of hypocrisies and self-deceptions. It is asserted and believed that peace is desired from ideal interest in peace itself and the suppression of antagonism, while in reality only the object fought for has lost its interest and the fighters would prefer to have their powers free for other kinds of activity.

Beyond this special case, the disappearance of the original object of the struggle often gives peculiar shadings to the termination of conflict. Every conflict which is not of an absolutely impersonal sort draws the available energies of the individual into its service; it operates as a point of crystallization, around which the individual energies arrange themselves at greater or lesser distances—the form of the active and reserve army is essentially repeated—and conflict thus gives to the whole complex of personalities, so far as it is drawn into the struggle, a peculiar structure. So soon, now, as conflict of one of the ordinary sorts is ended, through victory and defeat, through conciliation, through compromise, this psychical structure reconstructs itself into that of the peaceful condition. The central point shares with the energies drawn into struggle its own transition from agitation to pacification. Instead of this organic—although incalculably varied—process of the quieting down of the hostile movement, there often occurs a quite irrational and turbulent process, if the object of struggle suddenly disappears, so that the whole movement, so to speak, swings into emptiness. Everywhere emerge confusion and harm if psychical movements, which have been brought into existence for the sake of a definite content, are suddenly robbed of this purpose, so that they can no longer further develop themselves and express themselves in

a natural way, but are thrown back, without other recourse, upon themselves, or are forced to seek some meaningless substitute. If, therefore, while the conflict is in progress, accidents or a higher power spirit away its purpose—for instance, in the case of jealous rivalry, the object of which decides for a third party; or struggle for booty, which in the meanwhile is seized by another; or in the case of a theoretical controversy, in which a superior intelligence suddenly proves *both* contending assertions to be erroneous, etc.—under such circumstances there frequently occurs an empty continuance of hostility, a fruitless reciprocal accusing, a revival of earlier, long-buried differences. This is the continuation of the struggle movement, which must under these circumstances work itself off in senseless and tumultuous demonstrations before it can come to rest. This perhaps occurs most characteristically in the cases where the objective struggle is recognized by both parties as illusory and not worth the conflict. In such cases mortification over the blunder which neither of the parties is willing to confess to the other, draws out the struggle for a long time with an utterly groundless and painful expense of energy, but with the greater bitterness against the opponent who is the cause of committing us to this Quixotism.

The simplest and most radical sort of passage from war to peace is victory—a quite unique phenomenon in life, of which there are, to be sure, countless individual forms and measures, which, however, has no resemblance to any of the otherwise mentioned forms which may occur between persons. Victory is a mere watershed between war and peace; when considered absolutely, only an ideal structure which extends itself over no considerable time. For so long as struggle endures there is no definitive victor, and when peace exists a victory *has been* gained, but the act of victory is no longer in continuance (*man siegt nicht mehr*). Of the many shadings of victory, through which it qualifies the following peace, I mention here merely as an illustration the one which is brought about, not exclusively by the preponderance of the one party, but, at least in part, through the resignation of the other. This confession of inferiority (*Klein-Beigeben*), this acknowledgment of defeat, or this consent

that victory shall go to the other party without complete exhaustion of the resources and chances for struggle, is by no means always a simple phenomenon. A certain ascetic tendency may also enter in as a purely individual factor, the tendency to self-humiliation and to self-sacrifice, not strong enough to surrender one's self from the start without a struggle, but emerging so soon as the consciousness of being vanquished begins to take possession of the soul; or another variation may be that of finding its supreme charm in the contrast to the still vital and active disposition to struggle. Still further, there is impulse to the same conclusion in the feeling that it is worthier to yield rather than to trust to the last moment in the improbable chance of a fortunate turn of affairs. To throw away this chance and to elude at this price the final consequences that would be involved in utter defeat—this has something of the great and noble qualities of men who are sure, not merely of their strengths, but also of their weaknesses, without making it necessary for them in each case to make these perceptibly conscious. Finally, in this voluntariness of confessed defeat there is a last proof of power on the part of the agent; the latter has of himself been able to act. He has therewith virtually made a gift to the conqueror. Consequently, it is often to be observed in personal conflicts that the concession of the one party, before the other has actually been able to compel it, is regarded by the latter as a sort of insult, as though this latter party were really the weaker, to whom, however, for some reason or other, there is made a concession without its being really necessary. Behind the objective reasons for yielding, "um des lieben Friedens willen," a mixture of these subjective motives is not seldom concealed. The latter may not be entirely without visible consequences, however, for the further sociological attitude of the parties. In complete antithesis with the end of strife by victory is its ending by compromise. One of the most characteristic ways of subdividing struggles is on the basis of whether they are of a nature which admits of compromise or not. This is by no means to be decided merely by the question whether the stake at issue is an indivisible unity, or whether it is capable

of division between the parties. With reference to certain issues compromise by division is out of the question, as between rivals for a woman's favor, between possible purchasers of one and the same purchasable object that is a unit, and also in the case of struggles the motive of which is hatred and revenge. Nevertheless, struggles over indivisible objects are open to compromise in case these objects may be capable of representation, so that the literal stake may, indeed, fall only to the one, while this one, however, may indemnify the other for his concession by some equivalent value. Whether goods are exchangeable in this fashion depends, of course, not upon any objective equality of value between them, but exclusively upon the disposition of the parties to end the struggle which they have entered upon, or which is imminent by any such concession or indemnification. This chance is present in case of sheer obstinacy, where the most rational and abundant indemnity, for which the party would otherwise eagerly sacrifice the issue involved in the struggle, is refused for the sole reason that it is tendered by the opponent—and at the other extreme those other cases in which the party seems to be drawn in at first through the individuality of the object at issue, and then complacently resigns it to the adversary, compensated by an object the competence of which to replace the other is entirely inexplicable to any third party.

On the whole, compromise, especially of that type which is brought to pass through negotiation, however commonplace and matter-of-fact it has come to be in the processes of modern life, is one of the most important inventions for the uses of civilization. The impulse of uncivilized men, like that of children, is to seize upon every desirable object without further consideration, even though it be already in the possession of another. Robbery and gift are the most naïve forms of transfer of possession, and under primitive conditions change of possession seldom takes place without a struggle. It is the beginning of all civilized industry and commerce to find a way of avoiding this struggle through a process in which there is offered to the possessor of a desired object some other object from the possessions of the person desiring the exchange. Through this arrangement a

reduction is made in the total expenditure of energy as compared with the process of continuing or beginning a struggle. All exchange is a compromise. We are told of certain social conditions in which it is accounted as knightly to rob and to fight for the sake of robbery; while exchange and purchase are regarded in the same society as undignified and vulgar. The psychological explanation of this situation is to be found partly in the fact of the element of compromise in exchange, the factors of withdrawal and renunciation which make exchange the opposite pole to all struggle and conquest. Every exchange presupposes that values and interest have assumed an objective character. The decisive element is accordingly no longer the mere subjective passion of desire, to which struggle only corresponds, but the value of the object, which is recognized by both interested parties, but which without essential modification may be represented by various objects. Renunciation of the valued object in question, because one receives in another form the quantum of value contained in the same, is an admirable reason, wonderful also in its simplicity, whereby opposed interests are brought to accommodation without struggle. It certainly required a long historical development to make such means available, because it presupposes a psychological generalization of the universal valuation of the individual object, which at first is identified with the valuation; that is, it presupposes ability to rise above the prejudices of immediate desire. Compromise by representation (*Vertretbarkeit*), of which exchange is a special case, signifies in principle, although realized only in part, the possibility of avoiding struggle, or of setting a limit to it before the mere force of the interested parties has decided the issue.

In distinction from the objective character of accommodation of struggle through compromise, we should notice that *conciliation* is a purely subjective method of avoiding struggle. I refer here, not to that sort of conciliation which is the consequence of a compromise or of any other adjournment of struggle, but rather to the reasons for this adjournment. The state of mind which makes conciliation possible (*Versöhnlichkeit*) is a primary attitude which, entirely apart from objective grounds, seeks to end strug-

gle, just as, on the other hand, quarrelsomeness, even without any real occasion, promotes struggle. Probably both mental attitudes have been developed as matters of utility in connection with certain situations; at any rate, they have been developed psychologically to the measure of independent impulses, each of which often makes itself felt where the other would be more practically useful. We may even say that in the countless cases in which struggle is ended otherwise than in the most pitiless consistency of the exercise of force, this quite elementary and unreasoned tendency to conciliation is in play—that is, a factor quite distinct from weakness, or goodfellowship, from either social morality or love of the neighbor. This conciliating tendency is rather a quite specific sociological impulse which manifests itself exclusively as a pacificator, and is not even identical with the peaceful disposition in general. The latter avoids strife under all circumstances, or carries it on, if it is once undertaken, without going to extremes in the devotion of energy, and always with the undercurrents of longing for peace. The spirit of conciliation, however, manifests itself frequently in its full peculiarity precisely after complete devotion to the struggle, after the conflicting energies have exercised themselves to the full in the conflict.

Conciliation depends very intimately upon the external situation. It can occur both after the complete victory of the one party and after the progress of indecisive struggle, as well as after the arrangement of the compromise. Either of these situations may end the struggle without the added conciliation of the opponents. To bring about the latter it is not necessary that there shall be a supplementary repudiation or expression of regret with reference to the struggle. Moreover, conciliation is to be distinguished from the situation which may follow it. This may be either a relationship of attachment or alliance, and reciprocal respect, or a certain permanent distance which avoids all positive contacts. Conciliation is thus a removal of the roots of conflict, without reference to the fruits which these formerly bore, as well as to that which may later be planted in their place. On the other hand, these roots may continue to exist without putting forth any visible shoots.

A special problem is, furthermore, presented by the conciliated relationship in distinction from the relationship which has never been strained. We are not speaking here of cases whose inner rhythm vibrates between repulsion and conciliation, but of those that have suffered an actual breach and after it have come together again as upon a new basis. Such relationships may be characterized by various traits, as, for example, whether or not in this case they show increased or diminished intensity. This is at least the alternative for all deep and sensitive natures; in case of a relationship, after it has experienced a radical break, immediately reappears in precisely the same fashion as though nothing had happened, we may in general presuppose either frivolity or lack of refinement in the mental character of the persons concerned. The first-named case is the least complicated. That a once existing difference cannot ever be completely reconciled, not even when the parties are most frankly disposed to reconciliation, is intelligible without further comment. Under such circumstances it is not at all necessary that a remainder of the object at issue in the struggle shall as such still be present, but the mere fact that a breach has once occurred is alone decisive. To bring about this result, in the case of intimate relationships which have come to visible conflict, the following factor frequently co-operates. The parties have observed that it is possible to get along without each other, that life may perhaps not be quite as gay, but it still keeps on its course. This not merely reduces the value of the relationship, but the one party may, after the unity is restored, easily construe this fact as a species of betrayal and infidelity, which cannot be made good, and which unavoidably adulterates the newly adjusted relationship with a certain degree of indifference, or even mistrust, in spite of preferences to the contrary. To be sure, a certain self-deception is also often involved in this situation. The often surprising facility with which one endures the disruption of an intimate relationship comes from the excitement which we retain as one of the consequences of the catastrophe. This latter has made all our possible energies active, and their operation bears us along awhile and supports us. As, however, the death of a

friend does not in the first moment dispose its whole sadness, because it takes the lapse of time to present all the situations in which he was an element, and because we must first live through these situations as though after the loss of one of our bodily members, and because no first moment can summarize these experiences—in the same way an important relationship cannot be properly appraised at the moment of dissolving it, for at that time the grounds for its dissolution control our consciousness. We rather discover the loss for each separate hour only by experience of case after case, and consequently our feeling with reference to the loss does not become wholly just until after a long time. Meanwhile, we have seemed to endure the loss with a certain equanimity. For this reason also the conciliation of many relationships is deep and passionate in proportion to the length of time during which the breach has continued.

That the degree of intensity of the conciliated relationship grows beyond that of the unbroken relationship has various causes. Principally a background is created through the experience, in contrast with which all value and all continuations of the unity come into consciousness and vividness. In addition to this, the discretion with which one avoids every reference to what is past brings a new gentleness, indeed, even a new unspoken community of feeling into the relation. As a general rule, the common avoidance of a too sensitive point may signify quite as great intimacy and reciprocal understanding as the sort of indifference (*Ugenirtheit*) which makes each object of the inner life of the individual a matter on which to express opinion. Finally, the intensity of the wish to protect the newly enlivened relationship from every sort of shadow springs not merely from the experienced pains of the separation, but first of all from the consciousness that a second breach would not be so easily healed as the first. In countless cases such second reconciliation, at least between sensitive people, would reduce the whole relationship to the level of caricature. Even in the profoundest relationship a tragic breach and then a reconciliation may occur. This, however, belongs among the experiences which may not take place more than once. The repetition of the experience between the

same parties would rob it of all dignity and earnestness. For, supposing that one such repetition has occurred, nothing then appears against a second and a third, which would reduce the whole situation to a contemptible and frivolous proceeding. Perhaps this feeling that a repetition of the breach would be final—a feeling to which previous to the first breach there is properly no analogy—is for the more refined natures the strongest bond through which the conciliated relationship distinguishes itself from that which has never been interrupted.

The degree of reconciliation after conflict, after pain inflicted on one or both sides, is for the development of all the relationships of the persons concerned, both in minor and in major matters, of decided significance. For this reason there is need of a few words about its negative extreme, that is, irreconcilability. So long as this has rather an external meaning, so long as it proceeds from hatred, love of fighting, extravagance of the claims urged, and so on, it is no further problem. It becomes an additional problem when, as in the case of the conciliatory attitude, it presents itself as a formal sociological factor. In this case it requires, to be sure, a purely external situation in which to actualize itself, but, this being given, it proceeds quite spontaneously, and not merely as the consequence of further mediating emotions. Both tendencies belong to the polar elements, the combination of which determines all relationships between men. It is often said, for instance, that if we could not forget, we could not forgive, or we could not become completely reconciled. This would obviously mean the most frightful irreconcilability, since it makes conciliation depend upon the disappearance from consciousness of every occasion for the contrary attitude. Moreover, it would also, like all other states of consciousness, be subject to the constant danger of being called into existence through a revival of memory. If this whole opinion is to have any meaning at all, it is to be found in the reverse direction. The state of conciliation, as a primary fact, is in itself the reason why the quarrel and the pain which the one party has occasioned for the other mounts no longer into consciousness. In a corresponding way, essential irreconcilability by no means consists in

the fact that consciousness does not extend beyond the past conflict. The fact is rather that the soul has through the conflict undergone some sort of modification of itself, which cannot be recalled, which is not to be likened to a wound that can be healed, even though it leaves a scar, but rather to a lost member. This is the most tragic irreconcilability: neither a grudge nor a reservation nor secret spite needs to have remained in the soul and to have created a positive barrier between the two parties. The fact is merely that through the conflict which has been fought out something has been killed in the person in question which cannot be again brought to life, no matter how eager the efforts may be to that end. Here is a point at which the impotence of the will emerges most vividly in contrast with the actual personality. Wherever this is misunderstood there will be countless unjust judgments and self-martyrdoms. It is entirely useless to accuse a defective will for the impossibility of restoring the old relationship. While this is the form of irreconcilability in the case of very simple and not easily influenced natures, another form is observed in the case of persons who are subjectively highly differentiated. The image and after-effects of the conflict, and of all those things which are laid to the charge of the other party, remain in consciousness, and the painful impression created by it cannot be removed; but undiminished love and attachment gather around this image nevertheless, while recollections of it and resignation with reference to the past do not constitute a diminution of the attachment, but are wrought into the image of the other party; we love him now, so to speak, inclusive of these passive elements in the balance of our total relationship to him, which our thoughts can no longer eliminate from our conception of him. The bitterness of the struggle, the points at which the personality of the other party asserted itself, which bring into the relationship either a prominent renunciation or a constantly renewed irritation—all this is forgotten and really unreconciled. It is, however, so to speak, localized; it is absorbed as a factor in the total relationship, the central identity of which need not suffer because of this factor. That the quarrel leaves behind such a dissociating element,

which, however, is entirely drawn into the positive quality of the essential relationship, at the same time an organic member of the latter, which nevertheless does not immediately affect the soul of the whole—all this is not capable of further explanation on its conceptual side, but it must be psychologically experienced.

It is obvious, however, that these two manifestations of irreconcilability, which are so widely different from those usually designated by the term, still include the whole scale of this situation. The one permits the consequence of the conflict, utterly detached from its real content, to sink into the center of the soul. It completely makes over the personality in its profoundest depths, so far as it is related to the other. It leaves to the will for remedial action no access. In the other case, on the contrary, the psychological deposit of the struggle which seems to produce a sociological deficit, is also at the same time isolated; it remains a separate element which may be taken up into the image of the other, with the result that it is included in the total relationship to the other. Between this worst and this best case of irreconcilability—the former in which it vitiates the fundamental attitude, the latter in which it remains rigidly limited—stretches obviously the whole quantitative variety of degrees in which irreconcilability places peace still in the shadow of the conflict.

GEORG SIMMEL.

BERLIN, GERMANY.

[*To be continued.*]